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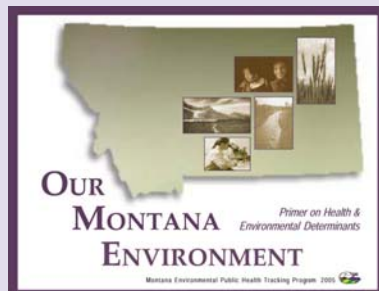


EPHT Publishes Needs Assessment Document

Montana EPHT staff published a color booklet entitled "Our Montana Environment, Primer on Health and Environmental Determinants" in September 2005. The document is intended for a general audience to explain why there is a need for environmental public health tracking and describes some of the key issues in Montana. The

directors of Montana Department of Environmental Quality and Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services provided a forward to the document. An

electronic copy can be found on our website: www.dphhs.mt.gov/epht. Hard copies are also available upon request. Please call (406) 444-4871.



New Interactive County Health Profiles Available

A new web-site can provide graphs and maps of

population and health data from each Montana County. Utilizing information provided by the Montana County Health Profiles, the EPHT program has teamed with

the Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) at Montana State Digital Library to develop an on-line interactive version of the profiles. The site allows users to select variables and develop graphs and maps that can be used for reports. Please visit the site at nris.mt.gov/epht and send us your comments as this tool is still being finalized. Scott Straessler has recently joined NRIS and will work as the EPHT liaison. Tim Metcalfe has moved to a GIS Analyst position.



Tim Metcalfe and Scott Straessler.

For more information on topics in this newsletter, as well as links to related resources, visit our website at www.dphhs.state.mt.us/epht.

MONTANA Environmental Public Health Tracking

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We seek to identify and prevent health conditions that may be caused by peoples' interactions with and exposures to their environment. We seek to bridge the gap between public health and the environment through linked data, education, and collaboration.

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Community Environmental Health Assessments Update

by Christine Deveny, EPHT Training and Technical Assistance Facilitator

Missoula County and Rocky Boy Tribes Complete Assessments

In September 2005, the Missoula City-County Health Department and the Rocky Boy Health Board successfully completed their community environmental health assessments. Both contractors thoroughly examined environmental health issues of concern to their local citizens through the use of surveys and com-

munity-based discussions. Their assessment teams and health boards helped determine the final priority issues of concern, and helped identify future action steps to address the concerns.

The top priorities identified through the Rocky Boy assessment are:

- ◆ Water pollution
- ◆ Community decay
- ◆ Heating and plumbing

Missoula County identified their top priorities as:

- ◆ Vehicle (transportation) emissions
- ◆ Indoor environment
- ◆ Food safety and nutrition

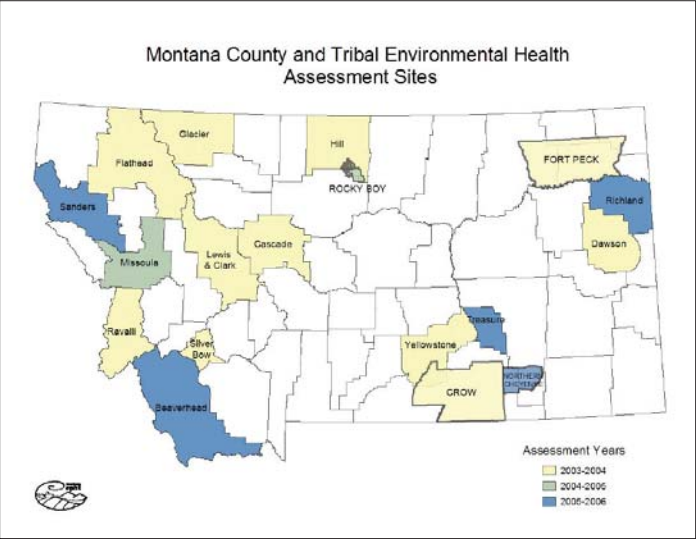
Both contractors found the assessment process and results to be beneficial to their local health agencies, and expect to use the information to drive future environmental health work. EPHT will include more details about these two assessments in future publications and on the Program website.

New Assessment Contractors Join in EPHT Collaboration

EPHT is pleased to work with five more county and tribal health departments to conduct community environmental health assessments. Beginning in October 2005, these new sites include Beaverhead, Richland, Sanders, and Treasure Counties, and the Northern Cheyenne Tribe.

continued on next page

Community Environmental Health Assessments Update *(continued)*



Each of the five new contractors will:

1. Form a Community Environmental Health Assessment Team to help plan and implement their work.
2. Conduct a county or reservation-wide survey, and use some additional assessment methods best suited for their communities to identify the

Environmental health assessment contractors attend December training. From left to right: Janet Wolfname, Northern Cheyenne THD; Erica Schultz, Richland Co. HD; and Deborah French, Treasure Co. HD.

environmental health concerns of a broad cross-section of their population.



3. Involve their Tribal and County Health Boards with identifying priority concerns and establishing key action steps to address those concerns.
4. Document their assessment process, findings, and recommendations in a final report due to EPHT in July 2006.

Ten representatives of the five newly contracted sites recently attended an EPHT-sponsored assessment orientation and training event in Helena in November 2005.

As the projects near completion in July 2006, the EPHT Program will have collaborated with

four out of seven of Montana's American Indian reservations, and 14 of 56 counties. These 18 local jurisdictions cover 65% of Montana's total population, and 62% of Montana's American Indian population.

First Round of Special Projects Completed; More to be Funded in 2006

Earlier this year, EPHT selected former assessment contractors Dawson, Hill, and Yellowstone County Health Departments, to receive small amounts of Special Project funding to implement some local action steps identified in their 2004 environmental health assessments. All three contractors successfully completed their projects in September 2005. Refer to the June EPHT newsletter for detailed project descriptions. Final results will be posted on the EPHT website in the near future. EPHT anticipates funding up to four more Special Projects in 2006. Proposals from assessment contractors are due in December 2005.

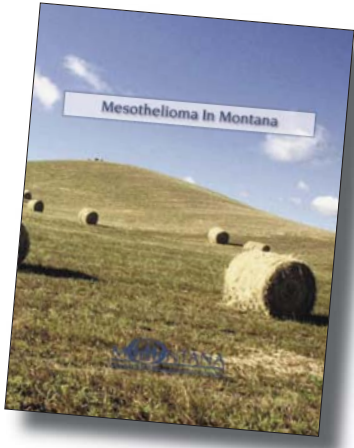
DPHHS Releases Mesothelioma Report

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) has just released Mesothelioma in Montana, a report on the form of cancer that develops after exposure to asbestos. The report describes mesothelioma, the mechanisms believed to lead to mesothelioma, major sources

of asbestos in Montana, and information about Montanans diagnosed with mesothelioma. This publication was initiated by Dr. Michael Spence, former state medical officer, and made possible with the cooperation of the DPHHS Office of Vital Statistics, Central Tumor Registry, and Environmental Public Health Tracking Project.

An electronic version of the report can be found online at www.dphhs.mt.gov/epht. Click on *What's New*.

If you have questions about the report, please contact Christine Korhonen, with the DPHHS Environmental Public Health Tracking Project, at 406-444-1701 or ckorhonen@mt.gov.



EPHT Epidemiologist Volunteers for Hurricane Disaster Relief

by Chris Korhonen



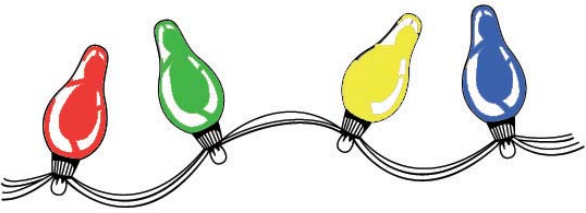
From October 30 to November 17, 2005, I received an opportunity to volunteer with the American Red Cross, at the F.G. Clark evacuee shelter in Baton Rouge. As I first arrived, Southern University's basketball stadium housed 200 people from New Orleans' 9th ward. By the time I left, all of the evacuees had moved to more permanent temporary housing, primarily FEMA trailers in Baton Rouge, and the shelter was closed down. Acting as the head of Registration and Administration, I kept track of who was staying in the shelter, who checked out, and where they went so their mail could be forwarded. The 12+ hour workdays were difficult and emotionally draining for the staff. Although, it was incredibly satisfying when the people we had gotten to know for two months, were finally given a place to call their own.

Photo of Hurricane Katrina by the National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service.

Intern Examines Environmental Justice Issues in Montana

Last spring, a student from UC Santa Cruz's Community Studies called to inquire about internship opportunities with Montana EPHT. Although unplanned, we felt this would be a great opportunity for both of us. Mosey (Elizabeth) Hardin arrived in July and we have been delighted to have her working with us for the past six months. Fortunately, she also was delighted by the work in Montana, and has decided to extend her internship a few more months. Mosey's focus area has been to provide outreach to advocacy groups that have indicated interest in EPHT. She is also doing a report exploring environmental justice issues in Montana. This spring, she will help us organize a conference on environmental justice issues in Montana, which will target advocacy partners.

Elizabeth "Mosey" Hardin.



Christmas Lights and Lead

You may have noticed warning labels when unpacking Christmas tree lights. The state of California's Proposition 65 requires the warning be included due to lead used in the wire coating of some lights. The amount of lead can vary considerably, but some tests show when present, lead can come off in the hands. Recommendations are:

- ◆ Do not allow children to handle holiday lights
- ◆ Adults should wash their hands immediately after handling lights
- ◆ Avoid lights made in China and other foreign countries which lack restrictions on the use of lead in products
- ◆ Look for alternative safer products when possible

One source of more information is the "Children's Health Environmental Coalition" website: www.checnet.org/healthhouse/education/articles-detail.asp?Main_ID=700